

JAPAN CHRISTIAN ACTIVITY NEWS

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NATIONAL CHRISTIAN COUNCIL'S RURAL EVANGELISM DEPT.

Creating a Rural Christian Fellowship

An increasing feeling of need for an interdenominational, nation-wide and even worldwide interchange and mutual support among Christian rural workers, has resulted in the NCC Dept. of Rural Evangelism projecting several area study conferences in the next two years. To this end, through the kind offices of Agricultural Missions Inc. in New York, the Ford Foundation has contributed \$1,800. This will be used for one study conference in Hokkaido this May and another in the Tokyo area some time this spring. Through such "grass roots" study conferences as these, the basis for a nationwide organizational conference of the Christian Rural Fellowship in Japan three years from now will be laid.

Meeting of Rural Evangelists in Tokyo

In order to plan for these local meetings, and evaluate just what is being done in rural evangelism in Japan today, forty five specialists, who are presently carrying on rural evangelism, gathered in Tokyo from all over Japan for two days of reports, discussion, and planning.

Rev. Katsube, the chairman of the NCC Department of Rural Evangelism keyed the meeting by reviewing the needs for intensified evangelism in rural Japan. Although farmers account for over half of the population of this country, they make up less than two percent of the church membership.

Dr. Reisner who had been present at a similar exploratory meeting in Japan in 1947, reviewed the progress that has been made and the signs of hope that have developed during the ensuing seven years. He also brought word of developments in rural evangelism in other countries which he has recently visited in the Orient.

Some indication of conditions in Japan today be gained from a quick summary of the reports given by groups represented at the meeting:

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The Kyodan and the 25 Year Plan.

Real progress has been made on all of the seven projects of the 25 Year plan except for the formation of a Christian Rural Fellowship, and this is now under-way as outlined above. The National Rural Christian Service Training Center has now developed to the point that it has four lines of activity: a seminary, a course for training kindergarten teachers, a technical research and training section, and a rural welfare institute. Four large areawide rural centers are being developed in Hokkaido, Tohoku, Kwansai and Kanto. Thirty-eight smaller prefectural rural centers and three fishing village centers are now actively at work. Leadership training conferences and rural Gospel schools are valuable parts of the effort to increase the effectiveness of already existing groups.

The Anglican Brotherhood of St. Andrew

In 1937 under the leadership of Dr. Paul Rush, a rural center was started at Kiyo Sato with a nucleus of seven Christians. Now it has grown to a membership of one hundred and forty and its influence has spread throughout the surrounding countryside. It has encouraged dairying to the extent that with a herd of thirty cows butter and cheese are being produced commercially and it plans to increase the herd to two hundred.

The St. Luke's Hospital in Tokyo has opened an extension clinic which is contributing to the health, of the surrounding villages. A camp site for summer conference groups has been developed which is in constant use for conferences during the summer months. With this center as the prototype, the Anglican Church (Seikokwai) plans to start two more centers, one in Hokkaido and one in the Tohoku area.

The Japan Lutheran Church Starts Rural Work.

As the result of a meeting of rural evangelists in Kyushu under the sponsorship of the NCC in 1951, the Lutheran church felt anew the need for a special group to make long term plans for rural evangelism and established the Rural Evangelism Committee. With an annual budget of ¥100,000 (\$280) they have held a convention of rural Christians each year and have concentrated on rural areas.

Of the 100 new places of evangelism started in the last three years, 25 are rural. This is an encouraging indication of the increased emphasis on rural evangelism in the Lutheran Churches in Japan. At present there are four active rural centers under Lutheran sponsorship, and the plan is to start a Christian high school in each of these centers.

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The Japan Federation of Baptist Churches.

When the J.F.B.C. withdrew from the Kyodan at the end of the war, there were so few ministers that almost none went to rural areas. However, realizing the importance of rural work, the pastors in towns and cities have done much to encourage the growth of Christian groups in villages, through the use of a manual for Baptist Training Unions. Through small groups such as these growing up into churches, they hope to enlarge their rural membership, especially in Saga, Kagoshima and Hiratsuka areas.

Summer Training Schools of the YMCA

In 1938 the YMCA realized that although its entire membership was urban, much of its membership had come recently from rural Japan; thus they had a responsibility to rural as well as urban Japan. They started Summer training schools for rural youth leaders, and as a result there are ten YMCAs in rural areas today. This special emphasis is continuing today.

Biggest Needs For The Future.

Although in the course of discussion, those attending the conference brought forth many suggestions for future work. Perhaps these four suggestions gained the most approval: 1) A key strategy for rural work is through the starting of kindergartens or nursery schools. Since both parents often work in the fields, there is a real need. There is fair indication that the local temples will soon take this initiative if other interested groups do not. Christian groups should take advantage of this effective means of getting into the family lives of the farmers.

2) Existing rural centers should be strengthened and made more effective before spreading out into new centers. Hino and the Nopporo Rakuno College (in Hokkaido) should be made strong instead of starting other leadership training centers.

3) We must "give feet" to rural centers. Although jeeps are too expensive to keep up, a motorcycle or even a motorbike would "add many feet" to already active workers.

4) Machinery such as milling or macaroni machines would both make existing centers more nearly self supporting and give them added contacts through community service.

STANLEY JONES TO MAKE FOURTH JAPAN VISIT

Under the sponsorship of the Centenary Movement Evangelism Commission, Dr. E. Stanley Jones will make his fourth post-war evangelistic trip to Japan from the first of February through April.



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A mass meeting in a public hall in Tokyo will be the first of seventy meetings at which Dr. Jones will preach all over Japan. He will hold an "Ashram" for the first time in Japan. About seventy people may attend the retreat which is to be held at Yugashima (on the Izu Peninsula). Any missionaries who are interested should contact the N.C.C. Office.

Rev. W. Martin, Executive Secretary of the Radio, Audio-visual Education and Mass Communications Commission of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A., was the featured speaker at the Dedication Ceremony for the newly completed Christian Audio-Visual Center in Tokyo held on January 9, 1955.

This center, costing \$60,000, was built largely by contributions from American mission boards associated with RAVEMCCO or the Interboard Committee in New York, and is located on the grounds of Aoyama College. The building, including recording studios, film and record libraries, office space, and facilities for workshops and producing various audio-visual aids, is the new location of the Audio-Visual Aids Commission (AVACO) of the National Christian Council of Japan. AVACO was formerly housed in the Christian Center in downtown Tokyo.

The Dedication Ceremony was timed to coincide with Rev. Martin's visit to Japan. He is on his way to the Asia Conference on Mass Communications to be held in Bangkok, Thailand, March 2-8.

In the course of his address Rev. Martin said:

"I see this building not as some static thing, but as a living tribute to a living Christ. I see it as a symbol of the deep desire of the churches of Japan and of America to win the people of Japan for Jesus Christ. ...It is dedicated not to the perpetuation of an institution, but to the proclamation of a living Faith...So long as this purpose..shall continue, this project shall have a reason to continue."

Among the others who took part on the program were: Dr. M. Kozaki, Chairman of the National Christian Council; Rev. A. Ebisawa, General Secretary of the N.C.C.; Bishop H. Yashiro, presiding Bishop of the Japan Episcopal Church; Rev. K. Aoto, Moderator of the United Church of Christ (Kyodan); and several missionaries, including Dr. P.S. Mayer, and Dr. & Mrs. Darley Downs.

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AVACO CONDUCTS LEADERSHIP-TRAINING CONFERENCE

On January 7-9 the Audio-Visual Aids Commission conducted a two day leadership-training conference, including lectures, panels and discussions on all phases of its work. This program led up to the Dedication Ceremony on the following Sunday and was timed so as to take advantage of the visit of Rev. W.B. Martin, RAVEMCCO Executive. Rev. Martin delivered two lectures sharing with the leaders experiences in the field from other parts of the world and giving encouragement and suggestions.

The conference was aimed at giving training to leadership from various parts of Japan and also to learn from them as to the successes and failures of AVACO's past program. Speakers and discussion both were sources of rich suggestions for future program development in this time of profound rethinking which is taking place within AVACO, occasioned by the new facilities available in the Christian Audio-Visual Center.

Another speaker well-known to westerners was Dr. Paul H. Vieth, Professor of Christian Education of Yale Divinity School, who is on a special teaching and study mission in Japan. In one of his two lectures Dr. Vieth said:

"The great religious picture has not been made. ...AVACO might be the means of giving to the world a new kind of picture in (the field of) Bible interpretation. I look forward to the day when the American monopoly will be broken and we can have from various countries interpretations of Christ."

Dr. Toyohiko Kagawa Presents Poem

On the occasion of the dedication of the Christian Audio-Visual center, Dr. Kagawa, famous Japanese pastor, who has long pushed for adequate use of audio-visual aids, radio and mass communications techniques in bringing the Gospel to Japan, wrote and read the following poem:

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"TRUMPETS, MAKE YOUR NOISE"

Trumpets, make your noise!
Horns, sound your call!
Japan is going to make a new start again.
According to the promise given by Jesus,
Breaking the darkness of three thousand years,
Released is the Time for Peace and Hope.

Sparrows on the eves, and larks in the field.
Sing loud with your voices together,
For the Day of God and Light is here.
Miners crouching deep down in the mines.
Sons of Zebedee, toiling among the waves of distant ocean.
Look up! There the star of Bethlehem is shining.
Telling us to have Hope.

People of Japan, crying over your sins.
Christ is coming!
Sparing no time bring the palm branches.
Bring your colt here.
For Christ is to march on this colt
Through the streets of Jerusalem now.

Each people has its own language.
So with the laboreres, They have theirs.
Through audio-visual media
Christ approaches the children of sinners.
He comforts the wives of garbage-men,
Weeping in the corner of the dark back streets.
Christ of the Twentieth Century is going forward
With Radio and Television,
With bands and players and singers,
Robed with light, riding on a chariot of matter.
With the orchestra of typhoon and earthquake,
Tidal waves; snowslides and landslides,
The Creator teaches and guides mankind.

So in this upper chamber which is raised
Upon the green hill, Aoyama,
Let us prepare the colt.
And singing Hosanna to His Glory,
Let us call the mass of His children together.
Because Christ is NOW
To march through the Land of the Rising Sun!

(Translated by Rev. Sabrow Yasumura)

